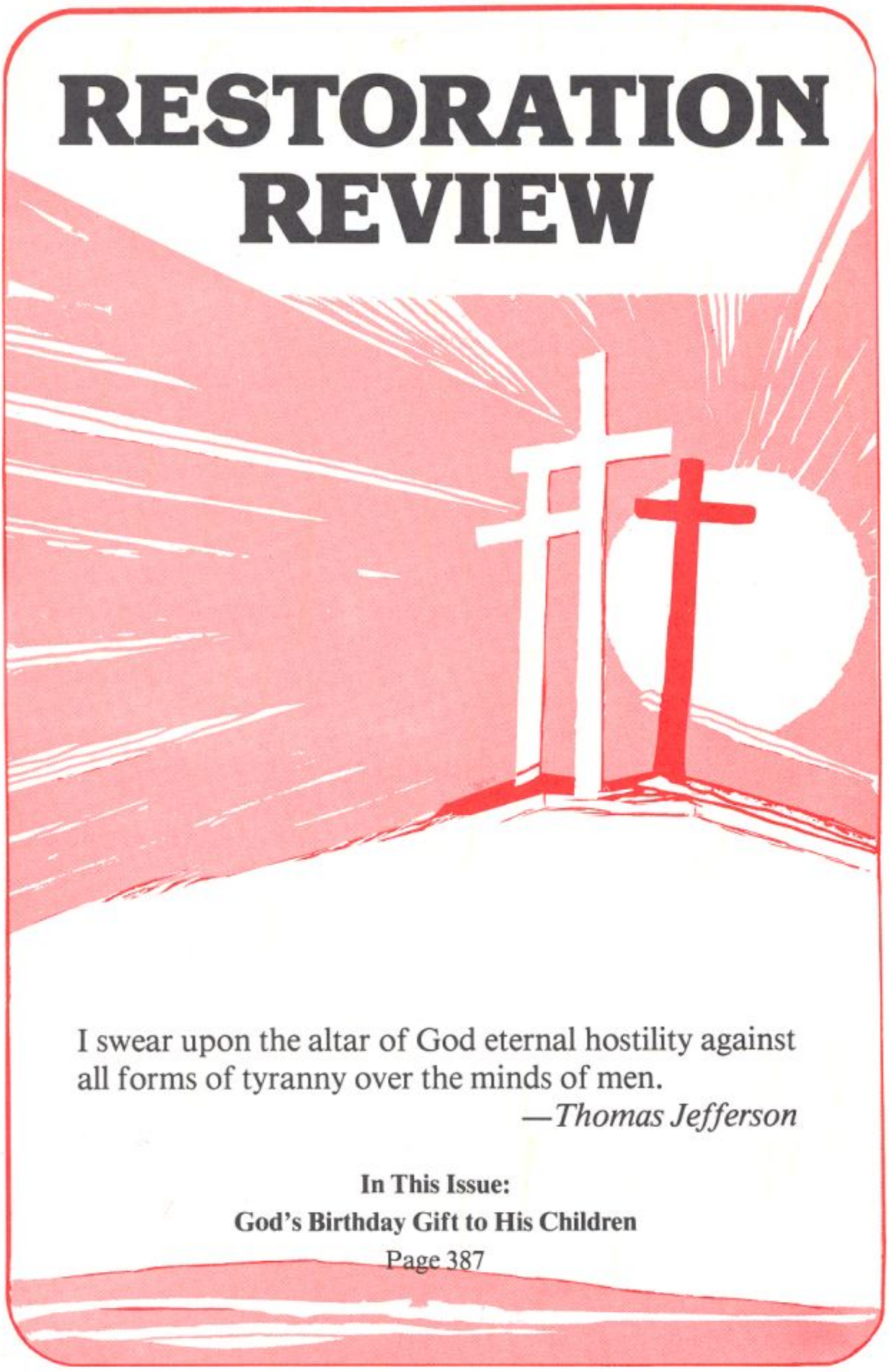
RESTORATION REVIEW



I swear upon the altar of God eternal hostility against all forms of tyranny over the minds of men.

—*Thomas Jefferson*

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PERSECUTION OF THE CHURCH

Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life. — Rev. 2:10

This charge to "the persecuted church," as the congregation of believers in Smyrna is sometimes called, is not saying simply that a Christian will be rewarded if he remains faithful all his life. It is rather saying that the believer is to be faithful *unto* death, a death exacted by the hand of persecution. It is urging the church to be faithful unto martyrdom itself.

Such was their lot. The Lord said to them through their messenger: "Indeed, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days," and he refers to "those things which you are about to suffer." When he assured them that "I know your tribulation," it must have comforted them, and when he said their ordeal would be but ten days he was telling them it would soon pass. While they were blasphemed by "a synagogue of Satan" and suffered poverty, the Lord could nonetheless say to them *You are rich!*

The Scriptures make it clear that those who suffer martyrdom for their faith will receive special blessings. They are indeed rich, however poor they may be or however young they have to die. Jesus made this truth one of the beatitudes: "Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" — in a special way, we may conclude, for he goes on to say, "Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven" (Mt. 5:10-12).

The apostle John sees martyrs "under the altar" in heaven, which may be a symbolic reference to the sacrificial nature of their shed blood, for in a literal scene only a few could find room under the altar. He identifies them as "those who had been slain for the word of God and for the testimony which they held" (Rev. 6:9). The apostle hears the martyrs cry out, "How long, O Lord, holy and true, until You judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?" If this is a call for vengeance it would run counter to the forgiving spirit of the Christ who prayed on the Cross for his persecutors. The context indicates it is a call for judgment upon all the earth.

God's response was that the martyrs were to rest a little while longer "until both the number of their fellow servants and their brethren, who would be killed as they were, was completed." This is a remarkable statement since it implies that the final judgment will not come until all those who are destined to die for their faith have suffered martyrdom. Do we not have to conclude from this that if Christ's coming is imminent then there will be no more martyrs, for their number is complete. If some of us are yet to die for our faith, then the final judgment and the coming of Christ will await the completion of the number of the martyrs.

It is evident in any event that martyrs are especially blessed. Rev. 2:10 gives them the crown of life, Rev. 6:11 a white robe, and in Rev. 20:4 they sit on thrones and live and reign with Christ. While these rewards are for all faithful saints (the apostle John himself to whom all these things were revealed was not a martyr), they are especially for those whose faith is sealed by a martyr's death. In 2 Tim. 4:6 the apostle Paul says, "I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand," which is a reference to his own martyr's death. He goes on to refer to "the crown of righteousness" that will be given him, but he acknowledges that such a crown is for all the faithful. The crown in these contexts is the victor's crown, such as was given in the Olympic games, except that the crown of life bestowed by the Lord will never fade.

So common was it in the early church for a witness for Christ to die for his faith that *martyr* (Greek *martus)* and *witness* came to mean the same, such as in Rev. 2:13, "Antipas, my faithful martyr (or witness), who was killed among you." Antipas was not a witness *(martus)* because he was put to death, but h..: was put to death because he was a witness. This illustrates how witnessing and suffering went hand in hand, as in the case of Jesus himself, who in Rev. 1:5 and 3:14 is called "the faithful martyr (or witness)." As Kittel's *Theological Dictionary* notes, every Christian who died for his faith was not a martyr, but "The name is reserved for those who prove the final seriousness of their witness by suffering death." Jesus, Paul, Stephen, James, and those in *Revelation* who were beheaded "for their witness of Jesus and for the word of God" were martyrs because they died while witnessing to the truth. In Acts 22:20 Paul refers to Stephen's martyrdom: "When the blood of your martyr Stephen was shed, I also was standing by consenting to his death." Stephen is known in history as the first Christian martyr. But, again, we are to note that Stephen was a martyr not only because he died for his faith but that he died while proclaiming his faith. It was therefore witnessing (that commonly led to death) that made one a martyr.

It is evident from 1 Pet. 5:1 that suffering with Christ made one a martyr even though there was no actual death. “I am a fellow elder and a witness (martyr) of the sufferings of Christ,” says the apostle. This does not mean that he was an eye-witness to Christ’s suffering on the Cross, but that he himself suffered with Christ in his ministry of the gospel. When he goes on to say that he was also “a partaker of the glory that will be revealed,” he is saying that he will receive the glory because he suffered with Christ.

There is implied in the New Testament that if one is a Christian he will suffer (perhaps die) for his faith. If there is no such thing in the New Testament as an unbaptized Christian, there is also no such thing as a non-suffering Christian. Paul more than implies it when he says in 2 Tim. 3:12, “Yes, and all those who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.” In fact Paul argues in Gal. 5:11 that “if I still preach circumcision, why do I still suffer persecution?” His persecution was a sign of his loyalty to Christ. If one seeks to please men, he can avoid persecution; if he seeks to please Christ, he will be persecuted. The apostle then pens a line that challenges the church in every age: *Then the offense of the Cross has ceased.*

It would be inconceivable to the apostle Paul that the church in the world could ever escape persecution, for the church’s message by its very nature is offensive to the world. If the church is not persecuted, then the offense of the cross has ceased. This he says in Gal. 5:11. Moreover, he contends in Gal. 6:12 that they who desire to make “a good showing in the flesh” and thus compromise the gospel do so “only that they may not suffer persecution for the cross of Christ.” Is not the apostle saying that there is no way to be a true Christian without suffering persecution?

The conflict between the church and the world is the conflict between flesh and spirit and between bondage and freedom. Those who love and serve carnal things will persecute those who love and serve spiritual things, and those who choose to be bound by ignorance and sectarianism will persecute those who choose to be free in Christ. So Paul teaches in Gal. 5 in the allegory of two women, Sarah and Hagar. In verse 29 he says, “He who was born according to the flesh (Ishmael, son of Hagar) persecuted him who was born according to the Spirit (Isaac, son of Sarah).”

Then the apostle drives home his point, *Even so it is now!* He is saying that those with carnal minds (those who think like the world and hold to worldly values) will always oppose, ridicule, and persecute those who seek to escape the enslaving systems of men and

be free in Christ. Is it not the case even in the church, and is not Paul's point that even in religion there is this ugly confrontation between bondage and freedom? It is the carnal, worldly, sectarian church that persecutes the free church.

It has been my experience in these many years as an editor that even among our own people one is destined to be persecuted by his own brethren when he breaks with the System and becomes a free man in Christ. Indeed, the more one conforms to the likeness of Christ and the more accepting he becomes of all God's children, which is the essence of freedom, the more he will be persecuted by those who are sectarians and' who love the praise of men more than the praise of God. It is common among us that you are "loved" only so long as you are true to the party line.

The recent history of the "captive churches" in the Communist bloc countries is an example of the eternal conflict between Christ and "the children of this world," who in order to have their systems will destroy those who follow the humble Nazarene. Bishops of the church in such countries as Hungary and Yugoslavia decided that it is better to "cooperate" with the powers that be and thus have some visible presence of the church than to have a decimated church underground. But the church is always an underground church in some parts of the world. There is a sense in which Christians are always "underground" in this world, for they know what their mission is and they know who the enemy is. Or to put it another way, the church will always be the persecuted church because it is a pilgrim church. This world is not our home.

Even in our free society this conflict between the carnal and the spiritual is evident. William Buckley on his TV program *Firing Line* told Malcolm Muggeridge that in the many social gatherings with America's elite he could comfortably introduce any subject for conversation except his religious faith. In our proper society it is inappropriate for someone to speak of his Christian faith. Buckley commented that any reference to Christ in such company is met with awkwardness and embarrassment, and so it is almost never done, not even by believers like Buckley, who confessed to his reticence. It illustrates how offensive the Cross is to our modern world.

Our Lord has told us that it would be that way: "They will deliver you up to tribulation and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations for My name's sake" (Mt. 24:9). Do we deceive ourselves into believing that it can be otherwise? Christians who expect to be *comfortable* in this world are not likely to have an authentic witness.

Christ's prediction of persecution certainly proved true for three centuries, until the Roman emperor Constantine became a Christian, supposedly. Christianity then became an accepted religion of the Empire and *official* persecution ceased, though *indirect* persecution continued. I question Constantine's conversion because of his reason for becoming a Christian. He said he saw the sign of the Cross in the sky that told him "By this conquer!" He resolved that if he won his next battle he would become a Christian. One can see what kind of Christian he was when he killed his son for seeking to usurp the throne and his wife for lying to him. Historians concede that the Empire corrupted the church more than the church converted the Empire. While a corrupt church need not be persecuted by the world, true Christians throughout history have always been persecuted.

The story of the early church is a story of persecution. At first it was instigated by the Jews, but once it was evident that Christians would not worship the emperor, which was the heart of pagan religion, the Romans declared Christianity an illegal religion. It was actually a crime to be a Christian. A believer could save himself by renouncing Christ and proclaiming *Caesar Christos!* in a pagan temple as he sprinkled incense over the eternal flame. Polycarp, the aged bishop of the church in Smyrna, was one who refused to confess Caesar as Lord, and so he was burned at the stake in 155 A.D., and so he could claim a martyr's reward. "Eighty and five years have I served him," he told his persecutors, "and I cannot deny him now."

That was the kind of testimony that rang out all over the Roman Empire from the time of Nero in 64 A.D., who burned Christians like torches and fed them to the lions, to the time of Diocletian in 300 A.D., who sought to exterminate the Christian faith by burning Scriptures and leveling the first church buildings that had been erected. Nero was quoted as saying as he inspected the torn bodies on the floor of the Colosseum, some of them still in a joyous embrace even in death, "These miserable creatures, how they loved one another!" And Diocletian found believing soldiers in his army who would not sacrifice to the emperor, and who did not seem to care when he ordered them to be executed.

Such testimony as this from the martyred church gave the verdict of history, *The blood of the saints became the seed of the kingdom. — the Editor*

Possibility thinking can turn persecution into opportunities — for healing, for forgiveness, for compassion. — *Robert Schuller*

Reading and conversation may furnish us with many ideas of men and things, yet it is our meditation that must form our judgment. —*Isaac Watts*

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GOD'S BIRTHDAY GIFT TO HIS CHILDREN

The Scriptures make it clear that every child of God receives a wonderful gift from the heavenly Father on his or her birthday. We realize of course that we have but one birthday, whether physical or spiritual. As for our physical birthday, we know that a 40-year-old has not had 40 birthdays, but only one birthday and 39 birthday anniversaries. So when we say *Happy Birthday!* we really mean *Happy Birthday Anniversary!* .

A person is born again, or better *born from above,* when he or she believes and obeys the gospel of Christ. That is his or her birthday. One could say, "I was born of the flesh in 1940, and I was born of the Spirit in 1960." Two birthdays, one of this world and one from above.

It is nice to receive a birthday (or birthday anniversary) gift. The God of heaven saw to it that gifts were brought to the Christ child: frankincense, a gift for a priest; gold, a gift for a king; myrrh, a gift for one who is to die. Fitting gifts they were since Jesus was to be both priest and king, and yet he came into the world to die. God's gifts are always appropriate and meaningful.

The birthday gift God has given to each of his children is the Holy Spirit. The apostolic proclamation on Pentecost attests to this: "Repent and be baptized, everyone of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of your sins, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38). Those who heard the gospel on that glorious day and obeyed it by being baptized were born from above. They received both a promise and a gift, the remission of their sins and the Holy Spirit. The gift of the Spirit was free, an expression of God's grace. It was the most wonderful gift anyone could ever receive. It was wonderful because the gift of the Spirit meant the continuing presence of Jesus in their hearts and lives.

It is also a precious gift because Jesus asked the Father for it in our behalf. “I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever” (Jn. 14:16), says our Lord, and in verse 18 he implies that the gift of the Helper is a kind of second coming of Christ: “I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you.” This must mean that he comes to us in the presence of the Holy Spirit. This is confirmed by the force of the word “another,” for the Greek term behind “*another* Helper” means *another of the same kind.* The Holy Spirit makes a magnificent birthday gift because it is like Jesus Christ. It is indeed the Spirit of Jesus Christ.

When Jesus promised “I will not leave you as orphans,” he meant that he would not leave us alone in this world. Never alone! What a promise that is! However crowded this world, however troubled and dangerous it becomes, he will never turn loose our hand. Our birthday gift means that Jesus is always with us.

The most meaningful gifts do things for those who receive them. The gift of money can payoff nagging debts. The gift of a coat can ward off the wintry blast. The gift of an automobile may mean getting to work and making a living. There are two blessings in particular associated with the gift of the Holy Spirit, besides the glory of the continuing presence of Jesus Christ in our lives.

It means, first of all, that we have a helper. Paul states it succinctly in Rom. 8:26: *the Spirit helps us in our weakness.* Jesus asked the Father to send his followers a Helper. The Greek work is *Paraclete,* which is an untranslatable word, though Comforter is the word often used in translation. Our birthday gift is so magnanimous that there is no way to put it in a word!

If we break the Greek word down we get something like “one who is called in,” that is, called in to help in time of trouble. The one called in may be a military adviser, or he may be an advocate to plead one’s case in court, or he may be a physician called in to advise in a serious illness.

I recall back in 1953 when I returned to Harvard to write my thesis I soon came down with acute pain in my right arm. It was so severe that I had to go to the university infirmary during the night. I was hospitalized and sedated. The infirmary staff spent two or three day trying to diagnose my illness. At last they called in a specialist from Harvard Medical School. He was my parac1ete — one called in to help. It so happened that he did not have the slightest notion what ailed me, and after a week of examination he finally

accepted my self-diagnosis. When he learned that Ouida was in faraway Texas and that I was trying to produce an acceptable Harvard Ph. D. thesis, he conceded that my problem might well be *anticipation anxiety,* and he laughed over my lofty terminology.

Whether generals, doctors, or lawyers, those called in cannot always help. But the one Jesus asked God to send in our behalf — "the one called in to help" — never fails. To think of the Spirit as Comforter is all right so long as we do not restrict his ministry to sorrow, which is what comforting usual means to us. Our Parac1ete is called in to encourage us to be brave in the midst of a moral crisis or to persevere in time of affliction or persecution. The angel of Lk. 22:43 was a parac1ete, one called in, to help Jesus as he prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane and turned his face toward the Cross.

That glorious passage (Rom. 8:26) not only tells us that the Holy Spirit helps us in our weakness, but it informs us of a truth about prayer that we may be reluctant to accept: *we do not know how to pray as we should.* This is because of our finitude. Not only are we blinded to what the future holds, but we do not understand all that is involved in the problem we face. But how gracious God is! In the very place he tells us that our prayers are inadequate he assures us that the Spirit serves as our intercessor, praying for us according to the will of God. Not only does God know what we need even before we ask him, as Jesus assures us in Matt. 6:8, but he "knows what the mind of the Spirit is" and thus hears the Spirit's "groanings" as if they were our own words. If it appears odd to us that the Parac1ete would utter "groanings" to God, or "agonizing longings" as Phillips renders it, it may help to realize that the Spirit is bearing *our* groanings or agonizing longings to the Father in terms that God understands since he knows the mind of the Spirit.

How helpless we feel under great stress or sorrow! Our feelings are too deep for words. Our Parac1ete, the Holy Spirit, comes in to help us in such weakness. In praying for us he somehow takes our feeble groanings and translates them into heavenly language. Sometimes we may break down in tears when we try to pray, even in public, and we may be embarrassed and feel that we failed those who asked us to pray, but if the congregation could hear how those longings of a broken heart were "translated" at the throne of God by the Holy Spirit it might well become ecstatic. As it is we could say to such a one who stumbled in his effort to pray, "Oh, yes, I heard your faltering words, but I did not hear what the Spirit said to the Father!"

How glorious it is to be a Christian! We have a birthday gift that is almost too good to be true!

Our birthday gift does something else that spells victory for the believer. The Holy Spirit is in a very important way our teacher. As Jesus prepared his disciples for his exodus from this world he left them this promise: “But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you” (Jn. 14:26). While this promise was particularly for the apostles, it is evident from such passages as 1 Jn. 2 that the Spirit has a teaching mission in the life of all believers. Verse 20 says, “But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and you know all things,” and verse 27 says even more, “But the anointing which you have received from Him abides in you, and you do not need anyone teach you; but as the same anointing teaches you concerning all things, and is true, and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you will abide in Him.”

The apostle assures the believer that he can *know,* as opposed to those who “went out from us but were not of us” (verse 19). They did not have the anointing and therefore did not know, and so they were not true Christians. Another apostle says this in Rom. 8:9 when he asserts that one is not a Christian if he does not have the Holy Spirit. The true believer knows that he is a true believer for two reasons: he has the assurances of the Holy Spirit and he has the presence of the Holy Spirit in his life.

When John says in verse 27, “You do not need anyone to teach you,” he refers particularly to the problem that he was addressing, the destructive work of the antichrists (verse 18) who were denying the true nature of Christ. The Spirit’s anointing or special presence gave them the discernment to know who the false teachers were. Because of their birthday gift which is for every Christian, they had the assurance.

Here we have the true sign of a Christian. It is not that he is a church member, for he can have external membership and lack internal integrity. It isn’t his baptism, for he can be baptized outwardly but not inwardly. The true sign of the believer is that he has the anointing of the Spirit. As we have observed from Rom. 8:9, Paul identifies the true Christian on this basis, that he has the Holy Spirit.

This is what 1 Jn. 3:24 is saying: “By this we know that he abides in us, by the Spirit whom He has given us.” We know! We can be sure! Because of the teaching ministry of the Holy Spirit. This is not a reference to all the detailed doctrine of the Christian faith, in which we all share in teaching one another. The Spirit is our teacher in that he gives us the assurance of the presence of Christ. This is the force of Eph. 1:18 when it refers to “the eyes of your understanding being enlightened, that you may know what is the hope of His

calling." How do we really know? Not by a string of Scriptures we may have memorized, nor by some list of good works. We know when the Spirit enlightens (teaches) our inner eyes. This is spiritual discernment.

The tragedy is that many Christians have this glorious birthday gift and do not realize it. And it is possible to have such a gift and not know it, just as one might have a treasure buried under his house and not know it, even as he lives in poverty. 1 Cor. 6:19 indicates that the Corinthians had received the Spirit but had not yet realized it.

It is difficult for the Spirit to teach us the assurances that are ours and to bear within us the fruit of love, joy, and peace as long as we fail to accept the gift and allow it to have its way in our lives. And so we remain a powerless, fruitless, joyless people. As we come to realize that the kingdom of God is not rule-keeping and church-keeping but "righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit" (Rom. 14:7) we will behave as people who know what they know, as a people anointed by the Spirit and rejoicing in the gift — God's birthday gift to all his children. — *the Editor*

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WHAT IS "THE BROTHERHOOD"?

Love the brotherhood. — 1 Pet. 2:17

It is one of the most attractive imperatives in the New Testament, and when one considers the circumstance in which it was given it takes on enormous significance. First, the charge to love the brotherhood comes from the heart and mind of a seasoned apostle who, according to tradition, was soon to die as a martyr in Rome. And it was from that dreadful pagan city that the apostle Peter writes, which he calls "Babylon" (1 Pet. 5:13). Peter was not unlike his Lord in this respect, for while Jesus prayed for the unity of all believers as he turned his face toward the Cross, Peter urges love for the brotherhood as he faced martyrdom.

The imperative to love the brotherhood also takes on deeper meaning when one realizes that it was written to "the pilgrims of the Dispersion" who were undergoing a time of trial. The apostle refers to those who "speak against you as evil doers" and he urges the believers to live such an exemplary life before such ones that "they may by your good works which they observe glorify God in the day of visitation" (2:12). Moreover, he urges them to have a good conscience before God so that when those who "defame you as evil

doers" will see their good works and be ashamed. So, it was in an atmosphere of calumny, defamation, and persecution that the believers were urged to love the brotherhood, along with fearing God and honoring the king, which appear in the same context.

If Peter's letter does nothing else, it should set us straight as to who our enemies are, who are identified in the letter as those who reproach the name of Christ (4:14). We have been too eager to do battle with each other, as if the enemy were our brethren. Or we put on the whole armor of God and go after "the denominations" as if they were the enemy. The enemy is rather identified in Scripture as "those who blaspheme the honorable name by which you are called" (Jas. 2:17) and "the rulers of the darkness of this age" (Eph. 6:12). The latter passage says plainly that our struggle is not against "flesh and blood" — not people as such — "but against the principalities and powers."

So *1 Peter* urges believers to love one another with a love that hides a multitude of sins (4:17). They were even to kiss one another with "a kiss of love" (5:14). And how elegant are the apostle's words in 1:22: "love one another fervently with a pure heart." It is clear enough that whatever else may be concluded about "brotherhood" Peter viewed it in terms of love.

And what does the apostle mean by the term, which appears only in *1 Peter* in the New Testament? It clearly has to do with *brothers* and of course *sisters,* and not institutions, systems, or organizations. Brotherhood is people, but a certain kind of people. The figures Peter applies to these people in this letter help to identify them, some of which are pilgrims, sojourners, elect, obedient children, redeemed, purified, born again, newborn babes, living stones, the people of God, God's sheep, saints, Christians, house of God, stewards of the grace of God. Anyone of these and all of these is what the apostle means by brotherhood.

The Greek work is defined as "a band of brothers" or simply Christians, all the brothers and sisters in Christ. While the apostle does not use the term *ecclesia* in this letter, that is what brotherhood refers to — *the church,* all those in every place who are in Christ Jesus.

Now that we've seen what an apostle of Christ meant by brotherhood, what do we mean when we use the term? There is hardly any term in the New Testament that is given such a sectarian twist as brotherhood. We have "brotherhood schools," "brotherhood papers," and "brotherhood agencies." We commonly hear the likes of "He's one of the best preachers in the brotherhood" and "He decided to work with our brotherhood."

Clearly, when we refer to "*our* brotherhood" we are not talking about what the apostle Peter had in mind, but to those churches who have fellowship in the North American Christian Convention. Or "the brotherhood" refers to those Churches of Christ associated with Pepperdine, Lipscomb, and Abilene Christian. It is plain sin for us to take a biblical term that underscores the unity of believers — "the children of God" everywhere — and prostitute it for the sake of but a small fraction of God's people. If "love the brotherhood" means that we show a special affection only for our own group, we are violating the teaching of Christ which calls for a love for all God's people.

The truth is that "brotherhood" has been so prostituted among us that it has come to be no more than a euphemism for denomination. It is both more factual and more honest to refer to "our denomination," but we dare not do that lest we be guilty of admitting what is obvious. I admire the brother who can say, "As a member of the Church of Christ denomination I love the brotherhood." In the first part he would be truthful and in the second part he would be scriptural, and that's not bad.

It is imperative that we get our thinking straight on this matter, for so long as we equate "the church" or "the brotherhood" to our own crowd we will never rise above the mentality of a narrow little sect. But how beautiful and how liberating it is once we see the majesty of the one, holy, apostolic, and catholic church, made up of all those who are in Christ Jesus! Such a view is not unlike what John saw in Rev. 7:9: "I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues,' standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, with palm branches in their hands." John saw the brotherhood in heaven, the church universal. That is what we are to love, and that includes both *us* and *them!*

I've met with believers in the back alleys of Hong Kong, at an army retreat center in Seoul, in a bamboo hut in the mountains of Thailand, in a public hall in Tokyo, as well as elegant and not-so-elegant church edifice!, around the world, and they are *all* part of the brotherhood of believers in Christ. Wherever the Spirit of God dwells in the hearts of men and women there is the Body of Christ, and that is the brotherhood.

If we prostitute *brotherhood* to mean more than those who are truly Christians, then we have some kind of humanistic fraternity; if we prostitute it to make it mean less than all true disciples of Christ, then we have a sect. And it is much worse to be a sect than to be a denomination. We can avoid being sectarian, while it may be well nigh impossible not to be a denomination. To be a sect is to presume to be the whole of the Body of Christ when

we are but a part. To be a denomination is to admit to separateness in name, organization, etc., but to claim to be a part of the larger brotherhood of Christians. If we hope someday to transcend denominationalism, we must first overcome our sectarianism, the "us only" mentality.

The figures the apostle Peter uses in his letter makes it clear that he sees the brotherhood in terms of unity in diversity. As *stewards* he sees God's children as having diverse gifts (4:10), and as *living stones* (2:5) we are different as we make up God's spiritual house. We can join Peter in thanking God that he did not make us bricks, shaped and formed exactly alike. — *the Editor*

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WHY LUTHER COULD NOT BE SAVED AS A ROMAN CATHOLIC (And Why His Parents Could Be)

In all my reading of Alexander Campbell I have found nothing that states his understanding of the meaning of religion as well as a dialogue that he invented between Martin Luther and a monk named Erastian. The dialogue deals with the nature of piety, which is the essence of religion, according to Mr. Campbell. The dialogue helps us to understand something very important in the thinking of our pioneers: *the principle of available light,* or the view that one is to be judged by the opportunities he has had.

In the dialogue Campbell has the monk asking Luther, "Friend Luther, What think you has become of your father?" Luther replies that he is sure that his father has gone to heaven. "And your mother too?," asked the monk. Luther expresses confidence that not only his parents but his grandparents as well are all in heaven "for Saxony cannot boast of more devout Catholics than they."

At this Erastian presses his point: "In the name of both St. Peter and St. Paul, why have you raised all this fuss in Germany and throughout the world? Do you expect anything better than to go to heaven when you die?"

Luther concedes that nothing is better than heaven and that he expects no more. The monk now wants to know that if his parents could be saved in the Roman church why couldn't he. "How dare you separate from the church in which your parents were saved?," he asked Luther.

Luther answers: “Because my parents were *pious* members of that church, which I could not possibly be.” Erastian wants to know why not. The reformer answers: *Because I have been favored with more knowledge than they.*

Campbell goes on to use this device to show that “more knowledge” condemns, more knowledge than one conforms to, for one is responsible according to his knowledge and ability. And so Campbell has Luther say of his parents: “They lived in conformity to all they knew, and died in the church; I live in conformity to what I know, and have left the church.”

This gives Campbell an opportunity to deal with the nature of piety. It was piety that kept Luther’s parents loyal to the Roman church, and it was piety that caused Luther to leave that church. In other contexts Campbell equates piety to sincerity and makes the pious, sincere heart the basis of one’s acceptance before God. He is quick to explain that he does not mean anything like “It doesn’t matter what you believe so long as you are sincere.” To Campbell piety and sincerity imply that one is never wilfully ignorant but he humbly seeks to know and to obey God’s will.

Campbell has Luther make an incisive observation in this mock dialogue: *the ratio of piety* is *the ratio of conformity to the revealed will of God.* So to be pious one must sincerely seek to do the will of God as he understands it, and not merely conform to the knowledge of his ancestors. Campbell also says: “No man can be justified today by living in accordance with the knowledge that he had yesterday.”

We have here a sobering view of the nature of piety. How many of us really make a sincere effort to conform to the truth we know? When we see how Campbell has Luther saying, “I must obey the light which God has given me,” we can ask ourselves if we are responsive to the light given to us in this enlightened 20th century.

And it makes us less judgmental to realize that others can respond only to the light they have. Many people, such as the American Indians for instance, have been so blighted by ignorance and by limited opportunity that they can only be judged by the measure of light given to them. But this is part of what Paul argues in *Romans,* that even if people have but little light they are responsible to that light. And we all have some light, to which we are less than faithful. This is what makes us all sinners. But still we are to grant to others what the God of heaven grants to all in terms of judgment, that it is required of a person according to what he has and not according to what he has not. — *the Editor*

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OUR SEVEN SACRAMENTS

By Cecil Hook

In our eagerness to be seen as the scripturally produced, undenominational church, we in the Church of Christ have insisted that we are neither Catholic, Protestant, nor Jewish. However that may be, it is unrealistic to claim that we have no theological inheritance from any of those sources.

Just as we can see marks of the parents in the child, we can identify various theological concepts marking the Church of Christ that were formulated by our predecessors. Perhaps, we are more kin to the Catholics than to the Protestants. One of the most influential non-scriptural concepts affecting our fundamental beliefs is sacramentalism. The Catholic theologians, who devised the sacramental system, teach that a sacrament is a ritual through which grace is poured into the soul. They have seven of them: Baptism, Confirmation, the Holy Eucharist, Penance, Matrimony, Holy Orders, and Extreme Unction.

Except in unusual circumstances, these ceremonies can be performed only by the clergy. So, whether by design or chance, the sacramental system binds the individual to the church for no spiritual grace can come outside the system. The sacraments established the power of the papacy and reinforced the authoritarian stance of the church. Only the church had the sacraments which were the avenues to God and salvation. The powers of excommunication and interdiction, which could withhold the sacraments, demanded subservience to the one true church.

Sacramentalism is a reinforcement of legalism. Legal technicalities are emphasized in demanding that, to be effective rather than damning, the ritual must be done in a precise manner, by the right person, at the right place. When we mix up the sequence of numbers in dialing the telephone, the call does not go through; likewise, one cannot get through to grace while ignoring the technicalities of the ritual.

Sacramental religion is built upon the concept of infused grace, goodness, and righteousness. It is something accomplished in us which makes us good, pure, and Christlike. A ritual does it! It ignores that righteousness in imputed on the basis of faith rather than infused through our ability to keep ceremonies and laws. It is a works-oriented system.

Our sacramental concept alters the purpose and meaning of our performances. It makes our activities an effort to please God and to gain his grace through keeping legal details of commands. And it makes us fearfully cautious lest we slip up on some technicality which would make our sincere effort bring a curse instead of grace.

In the Church of Christ we have transferred much of the sacramental concept into our purposes for participation in assemblies, singing, praying, teaching, giving, communing, and baptism. We might say that these have become the seven sacraments of the Church of Christ. They have become the rigidly controlled route to heaven, binding the disciple to the one true church and its elders. Being technically correct in each detail is of high importance lest we fall short of the grace of God and arouse his displeasure. Anyone who questions or seeks to change any of these well defined steps or patterns is looked upon as a troublemaker and, if he persists, he is dealt with as a heretic.

Now, let us review the seven sacraments of the Church of Christ to see how our inheritance has prevailed in our thought and practice.

1. In assemblies, “let all things be done for edification.” God left it to us to conduct meetings that are relevant to the needs of those present so as to upbuild them. The value derived from assemblies is the strength gained from them. Traditionally, that purpose and practice has been altered among us. Now assemblies emphasize worship through rituals done in specific detail so as to fulfill commands, please God, and thus be made righteous. Thus grace comes through our ceremonial works rather than growing in grace through strengthening the inward man.

2. Singing is for the purpose of teaching and admonishing one another, a horizontal outreach. But we have sold ourselves on the idea that we sing because we are commanded to as a ritual of worship which, when done technically right, pleases God, who then checks us as righteous, a vertical upreach. But if anyone attempts to teach and edify by means of a quartet or a guitar, the blessing is withheld and the worshippers are condemned. The value of the performance is in doing it as required rather than in the good that is accomplished in us.

3. Because we are “commanded” to pray, we must be sure to keep that command correctly so that we will be in the good grace of the Father, according to our sacramentalism. The sincere prayer is in vain if one forgets to say “in Jesus’ name” or if it is voiced by a woman in the presence of men! This emphasizes detail rather than a living, reconciled, communicating relationship with God.

4. Since we see teaching as an “act of worship,” we conclude that its performance satisfies God and credits a blessing whether it is uplifting or not. Even though the subject matter is learned, however, according to our contention, a blessing is not forthcoming if the teacher is of the wrong gender. The specifics of the performance must be correct in order for a sacrament to bless the soul!

5. Having made the giving of money an “act of worship,” we have made it a sacrament also. But the blessing of giving is invalidated if it is not given on the first day of the week, or if the disciple has used his resources to help others and has none left to “lay by in store” in the collection basket to support the system. He has robbed God of tithes and offerings! His offering must be “given to God” in worship rather than to be used for the benefit of man.

6. What is the value of the Lord’s Supper? Its value is in causing us to remember and declare the basis of our hope. Participation blesses us only in what it causes us to think. If our faith has not been strengthened, then the ritual is fruitless. Sacramentalism allows one to “take communion” for a blessing and to be judged righteous without truly communing. It becomes a sort of magic ceremony that is effective when we work the right combination of unleavened bread, unfermented grape juice, the bread first, the cup second, separate prayers for each, separate serving, with no singing during the eating and drinking. But regardless of how vividly participation might renew our memory and revive our faith, it becomes damning if any of the details are changed. That is sacramentalism in the truest sense of the Catholic definition.

7. Baptism is our most emphatic sacrament. Isn’t baptism a ritual or ceremony through which grace is conferred to the soul? Doesn’t it affect a new birth in us? Most of our people have given affirmative answers to those questions. We have taught baptismal regeneration—that in baptism, divine action transforms and regenerates the soul in a new birth process.

Baptism symbolizes and confirms the change that the convert has undergone rather than accomplishing the change. The conversion process is similar to the birth process. There is an insemination, a conception, a period of gestation, and a parturition or birth. The birth finalizes what has been taking place in the womb rather than being the cause of the life developing process. The parturition is necessary, but not the cause of life. Life is not infused into the fetus at birth, yet the life-giving process is incomplete without it.

In a similar manner, a sinner hears the gospel, believes, repents, and is baptized. Although baptism is necessary in this procedure, it is not the cause of life. Baptism confirms what has already taken place. Regeneration is a process finalized by baptism instead of being produced by it.

At the completion of this birth process, righteousness is imputed rather than the person having been made righteous by an act of grace in response to performance of a sacramental rite. Baptism imparts grace no more than belief, repentance, or confession does. These are all necessary for salvation. When baptism is said to save us, a part of the saving process is being put for the whole. That is a literary device known as a metonymy when the part is used for the whole.

The above is in harmony with the Baptist view: “Baptism, as taught in the New Testament, is a picture of death and burial to sin and resurrection to a new life, a picture of what has already taken place in the heart, not the means by which the spiritual change is wrought.” (International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, V. 1, p. 387). However, Baptists may not always teach that.

This subject involves an understanding of how a person is justified at conversion and throughout life. Does God justify a man by accounting him innocent or by making him innocent? Is a man justified by having Christ’s perfection given to his credit, or by having Christ’s perfection put into his heart? Does God account us as regenerated because of our faith and commitment, or are we justified by a renovation within the heart produced by the Spirit? Does God accept us while sinners by accounting Jesus’ goodness to us, or must he change us into persons pleasing to him to be accepted?

The latter choice of each of these questions attributes a sacramental effect to baptism through which a person is made clean, holy, and regenerated. It calls for justification by God’s work of grace in man rather than justification by God’s work of grace in Christ. This is works salvation in which a person must cease to be a sinner before he is justified instead of the sinner being justified by faith.

When we find our security in performing rituals of “worship services,” there is the problem of never being sure we have performed enough. In supposing that we can achieve the grace of God, we forget that salvation is free and that salvation is a gift of God.

When we abandon the sacramental ideas we have inherited, we can take more thought to minister to the needs of the Body, both in the assembly and in daily life, through caring service rather than rituals. *—1350 Huisache, New Braunfels, Texas 78130*

The fact that our minds are operated on chiefly by ideas of things, should teach us on all occasions to seek correct knowledge; and never to clothe things with fancied properties and excellencies which they do not possess. If so, our happiness will be ill-founded and false. — *Walter Scott*

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OUR CHANGING WORLD

The fourth annual unity conference sponsored by the University Church of Christ in Conway, Arkansas is set for January 22-24. This is a tremendously exciting affair each year at a friendly, Christ -serving church, and I urge you to attend. The resource people this year will be Jim Bates, a superintendent in the Methodist Church; William Baker, professor at MidSouth Christian College; and Leroy Garrett, editor of *Restoration Review.* The studies will include ways to promote unity, obstacles to unity, and hermeneutics and unity. Write or call the church for further information: 310 Donaghey, Conway, AR 72032, phone 501-329-9176.

The Volkswagon Co. in Germany has given Hans Kung of Tubingen University a grant of 750,000 DM for the study of women and the church. Other news from Germany indicates that as many as 400 Lutheran ministers have refused to baptize their own children. If the German church can set us on the right course in regard to both baptism and women, then it surely safeguards its description as “the land of the Reformation.”

The elders of the Church of Christ in Friendswood, TX, have issued “a letter of intention” to the congregation. “Our Goal/Desire for this body of Christian people,” they state, “is for us to be *committed* to Christ and in the enjoyment of knowing Him as Savior —to Create an environment where people can grow to the fullness of Christian maturity.” In reference to their own role they say, “The elders will model a studious, prayerful effort to become more mature. We will seek to be caring, encouraging, and diligent. We will

listen to God and the congregation." With more of that kind of thing in our churches we will have fewer law suits.

Charles and Karen Sturms once worked among Churches of Christ but they are now teaming up with the Christian Missionary Fellowship to serve as missionaries to Indonesia, where they worked for three years in the 1970's. They are looking for individuals and churches who may be interested in helping in gospel work in Southeast Asia. If you will write them at 2948 Bailey Lane, Eugene, OR 97401. Charles has a master's degree in missions from ACU.

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READERS' EXCHANGE

Let us pray for a world that is in trouble. The "good old days" were not ideal. It seems to me, however, that in my 85 years I never saw as much hatred, violence, greed and disrespect for life as we now have. —*Cloyd Anthony, Hardy, AR.*

More and more we are reminded how fallen this world is and how disappointments and heartaches will always be part of our lot here. We could not bear it except for the hope of something better awaiting us at the end. — *Jim & Clovis Ledbetter, Birmingham, AL.*

My first impulse after reading your "Women and Children in the Early Church" was to write and point out all the inconsistencies in both your and Paul's reasoning, but then I decided that you have come a long way out of the jungle with only the help of the Holy Spirit and that eventually He will help you to understand what is shameful and what is not. Of course you don't *know* what you would do (or even think) if you were a woman in 1986. As well as you like to preach the gospel you might think you were really getting a raw deal in the church! Please do not disfellowship me or stop my subscription because I disagree with you and Paul that it is *shameful* for a woman to speak before a mixed assembly in or out of the church. I agree that it probably was thought shameful in A.D. 56. — *Elizabeth Manure, Bend, OR.*

(I love you as much when you disagree with what I say as when you agree, and if we cut off all those who sometimes disagree we might not have a sub list left. Furthermore, I have no illusions about my conclusions being the last word on a subject. You may be right. — *Ed.)*

Although you continue to point out the need for a more open and liberated view of women and children, you clearly respect Paul's restrictions. Everyone I read anymore, it seems, either totally ignores the "embarrassing" scriptures or rationalize away their force. We have a way to go in giving our women their full due, but we don't make any real progress when we forsake fidelity to the Word. — *Thomas Langford, Lubbock, TX.*

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BOOK NOTES

A number of our readers have taken advantage of our offer of 18 back issues of this journal, selected at random over many years, for only $3.00. Our newer subscribers might especially be interested in what we have said back through the years. This special offer is mailed out but once a month, at our regular mailing, but you may place your order at anytime.

If you have not read C. S. Lewis, and you owe it to yourself to do so, you might start with *Mere Christianity* and *The Screwtape Letters,* his two most widely appreciated titles. They have life-changing potential for believers as well as unbelievers. They are $4.50 each, postpaid, or $7.95 for both titles.

I am presently reading with great profit *The Daily Bible Study* series on the Old Testament, patterned after Barclay's series on the New Testament. the 24-volume set is now complete and range from $6.95 to $8.95. You should try one or two, and if you agree with me as to their amazing value, you can add an occasional volume until you have them all. You might start with *Genesis* (Vol. I) or *Isaiah* (Vol. I), which are $7.50 and $8.50, postpaid.

With this issue we complete our 34th year of publication, 28 of those years under the name of *Restoration Review.* With our next issue in January we begin our 29th volume and for two years, the Lord willing, we will pursue a study of Biblical interpretation or rules and principles of hermeneutics. Our next bound volume, which should be available by early spring, will have the title *Adventures of the Early Church* and will contain the past two years of this journal, 1985-86, and will match the previous bound volumes. If you have a standing order for the bound volumes, you need not order again. If not, you should reserve a copy. The price will probably be $10.50, which is little more than the subscription price.

The latest word from the publisher is that *The Stone-Campbell Movement* by Leroy Garrett is suddenly out of print, with orders unfilled. A new printing should be ready by February. If you do not yet have this book, let us reserve you a copy at $21.95. This new printing puts us over 10,000 copies, which is something for a rather expensive history book. We will still offer a free copy when you send a club — 8 subs at $3.00 each — to this journal, new or renewal, including your own, total $24.00.

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